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TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [SY](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON UNIIIC EXTENSION, CHAPTER VII FOR
TRIBUNAL, AND LEBANON CONTACT GROUP

REF: A. STATE 34691
[1](#)B. REINEMEYER-KUMAR TELCON

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Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro D. Wolff, per 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. During a meeting with French PR de la Sabliere on March 19, Ambassador Wolff sought French views on timing/strategy for a possible Chapter VII resolution to establish the Special Lebanon Tribunal and underscored the need to convene a meeting of the Lebanon Contact Group before Security Council consultations on the latest UNSCR 1701 report on April 5 (per ref A). He also said the U.S. would support an extension of UNIIIC's mandate until 15 June 2008, but raised the possibility of adding language recognizing that the Commission could complete its mandate earlier. De la Sabliere said France's policy is that a Chapter VII resolution should be "last resort, because everything must be done to encourage a Lebanese solution, but we should re-assess our options at the end of March." Privately, however, he was skeptical that Russia would abandon a threat to veto such a resolution unless the tribunal agreement and statute are amended to exclude high-ranking Syrian officials from the court's jurisdiction. On the Contact Group, de la Sabliere expressed French reluctance to allow such a meeting to "interfere" with UNSCR 1701 deliberations, but promised to convey U.S. views to Paris again. After initially arguing that the draft resolution extending UNIIIC's mandate should be "totally technical," the French PR agreed to support U.S. edits if Brammertz does not object to the language. End Summary.

UNIIIC Extension

[1](#)2. (C) Per ref A, Ambassador Wolff confirmed U.S. support for a resolution extending UNIIIC's mandate, but raised the possibility of including language to ensure a smooth transition between the Commission and the tribunal and to encourage UNIIIC to complete its work as soon as possible. Ambassador de la Sabliere initially argued that the resolution should be "totally technical" in order to avoid provoking Russian opposition, but after Poloff conveyed to the French Department edits to the resolution per ref B (OP 2: Decides to extend the mandate of the Commission until 15 June 2008 (and declares its readiness to terminate the mandate earlier if the Commission reports that it has completed the implementation of its mandate)), de la Sabliere told Ambassador Wolff on March 21 that he would advise Paris to accept the U.S. edits if/if Brammertz did not believe they would cause the Commission any problems. The French undertook to check Brammertz's views through UN Legal Counsel Nicolas Michel on March 22 and revert (Note: Brammertz left

for Beirut on March 21. End Note.).

Chapter VII for Tribunal?

13. (C) De la Sabliere said official French policy is, as conveyed by French diplomatic adviser Maurice Gourdault-Montagne to NSA Hadley, that using Chapter VII to establish the Special Tribunal for Lebanon should be a "last resort, because everything must be done to encourage a Lebanese solution, but we should re-assess our options at the end of March." Privately, however, de la Sabliere was skeptical about the prospects to secure such a resolution. Discounting rumors that the Russians will not block such a resolution, he argued that Russia has no reason to telegraph its position now. By maintaining ambiguity about its stance, Russia could maintain pressure on the Lebanese to reach a solution themselves. Ultimately, De la Sabliere opined, Russia would only consent to a Chapter VII resolution if the tribunal agreement and statute are amended to exclude high-ranking Syrian officials from its jurisdiction. The French Mission has therefore advised Paris that it should support a Chapter VII resolution only if an agreement has been worked out with the Russians beforehand. Otherwise, there is a good chance the resolution would fail in the Council and prospects for the tribunal would be dashed completely.

14. (C) Noting that Washington had yet to adopt a position on a Chapter VII resolution and would also wait to see how events unfold in Lebanon, Ambassador Wolff said he was privately less concerned about possible Russian opposition. He suggested it would be important to secure three elements before taking such a step. First, PM Siniora should send the Security Council a petition signed by 70 members of parliament, proving that majority support for ratification of the tribunal agreement is being blocked by anti-democratic

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means. Second, the Lebanese should secure regional (Saudi and Egyptian) support for the invocation of Chapter VII authority. Third, Brammertz must make compelling, objective arguments in favor of establishing the tribunal. If we have all three elements, Ambassador Wolff suggested, the Russians would be hard-pressed to veto such a resolution and oppose PM Siniora, other Arab states, and Brammertz. Ambassador Wolff also noted that since the Council would have to adopt a Chapter VII resolution to compel cooperation with the court in any case, we should combine the two objectives if the Lebanese fail to ratify the tribunal agreement. He emphasized, however, that securing Lebanese parliamentary ratification of the tribunal agreement remains the best solution.

Lebanon Contact Group

15. (C) Per ref A, Ambassador Wolff emphasized U.S. interest in convening a meeting of the Lebanon Contact Group before the April 5 UNSC consultations on resolution 1701. The U.S., France, and other countries had talked about convening the Contact Group since January 2007, and it was important that the group now meet to discuss ways to follow up to the arms embargo in UNSCR 1701. De la Sabliere expressed Paris's concern that the discussions not interfere with UNSCR 1701 deliberations and that non-members of the Council (e.g. Germany and Spain) not be given an opportunity to influence the Council's debate, but he took note of U.S. interest and agreed to check with Paris.

16. (C) Subsequently, French Mission Poloff Ludovic Pouille told Poloff on March 21 that Paris was "totally confused" about its approach to the Contact Group meeting and had not answered the Mission's request for clear guidance. Pouille said the Mission had therefore recommended that Paris and Washington engage directly to decide on a way forward. When

Pouille later promised to share a draft PRST on UNSCR 1701 with USUN, Poloff told him that Washington had not yet decided whether it would support any Council reaction and that it was important for the Contact Group to meet to decide how to follow up to the arms embargo in UNSCR 1701. Pouille insisted that the Council "must react" to the latest 1701 report, but said he would again convey U.S. concerns about the timing of the Contact Group to Paris.

WOLFF